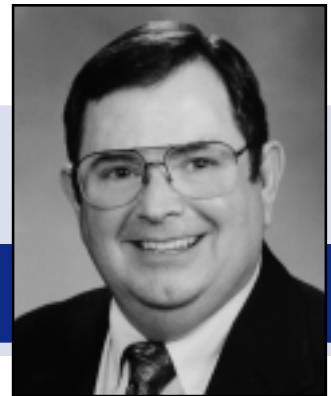


Representative
MARK SCHOESLER

9th District

2000 Session Review

Serving Asotin, Whitman, Adams
and south Spokane counties.



Representative
DON COX

Dear friends,

"The tax cut provided by I-695 is not a license to shortchange vital services. Rather than creating an emergency, we believe the stage is set for substantive changes in the way government does business."

Those were the words we used in our newsletter when the 2000 session convened in January, and those are the words we lived by throughout the session. It was an opportunity to prioritize spending, reduce waste and begin changing the way government does business.

The message from the voters resonated loud and clear and, on March 22, the House approved a compromise supplemental budget that reflected our commitment to responsibly address the challenges of Initiative 695. The House plan — which passed with a strong bipartisan vote of 85-13 — was the first in state history to be drafted by budget writers who shared equal power. The centerpiece of the bipartisan proposal was agreement on providing an ongoing source of revenue for vital transportation projects, and to help cities and counties which lost funding for police and fire safety, public health and other programs impacted by the initiative. The voters' wishes were also reflected by the Legislature's passage of a measure that makes the \$30 car tabs permanent.

Regrettably, the Democrat-controlled Senate would not support the responsible and viable bipartisan budget that cleared the House, and when this newsletter went to press, the two chambers were still locked in tough negotiations.

There were many significant accomplishments this year, and this session review is our report on how we dealt with some of the other major issues. We've also included the results of the questionnaire that we included in the January newsletter.

If you have questions or thoughts to share about other legislation or about state government, please call our offices or write a letter. We are always glad to hear from you.

Sincerely,


Mark Schoesler


Don Cox

Your Ninth District Legislators

Representative
DON COX

Committees:

- Education
- Finance
- Judiciary

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(360) 786-7942
cox_do@leg.wa.gov

Representative
MARK SCHOESLER

House Republican Whip

Committees:

- Agriculture and Ecology
- Capital Budget
- Rules

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Landmark Patients' Bill of Rights

The Legislature approved a pair of bills to protect patients' rights and help revive the state's struggling individual health insurance market. The bills put the state on track to-

ward giving patients greater control of their health care decisions, and draw insurance carriers back to the 32 counties in Washington where individual policies are not currently available.

Senate Bill 6199, the so-called "Patients' Bill of Rights," establishes an internal grievance process, gives patients the right to sue their health insurance carriers, and provides better protection for patient privacy. While we supported the bill, we are concerned that it doesn't apply to about 2.3 million people who are covered by self-insured or fee-for-service health care plans.

Individual health insurance

Our other major health care priority this year was stabilizing the private market, and **Senate Bill 6067** helps get us there. The measure should make coverage available to about 600,000 citizens who currently cannot buy it.

The bill isn't perfect, but it incorporates sound insurance principles that address the critical elements of health care — choice, access and affordability. When insurance carriers can compete in the free market, consumers benefit from lower costs and greater choice. The bill reforms health care regulations, including extending the waiting period for coverage of pre-existing conditions to nine months from three — currently the shortest in the nation.

We were very pleased to support these bills which represent decisive steps to restore balance between insurers and their clients, and to stabilize the individual-policy market. It's been a long and difficult process, but we're gratified that we were able to reach bipartisan agreement on this legislation.

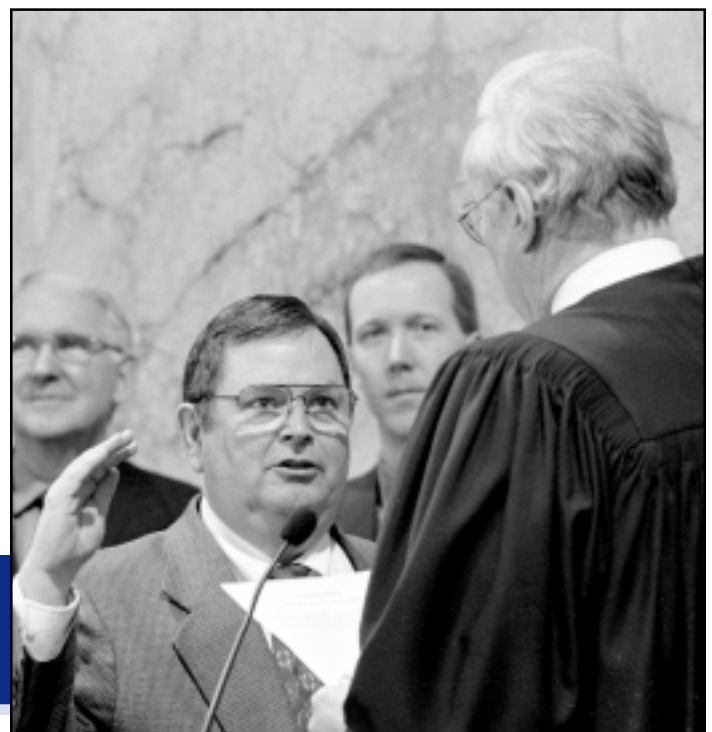
Help for dislocated workers: *Unemployment/ retraining bill also cuts unemployment taxes*

A long-awaited agreement to provide help for laid-off workers in the fisheries, timber and aerospace industries won strong bipartisan approval this year. Final passage of the extensive retraining/unemployment benefit package culminated months of behind-the-scenes work and negotiations, and represents a major victory for the people of

Washington state.

Substitute House Bill 3077 provides extended benefits and retraining to dislocated workers for 52 weeks. Qualified timber, fin fish and aerospace workers would be eligible for benefits for 74 weeks over the next two years. This is really a lifeline for people who need the help to rebuild lives and careers in a changing economy.

The measure also headed off an increase in the unemployment insurance tax which was set to be imposed on employers. About 70 percent of all state businesses will also see their premiums drop by an additional 5 percent to 8 percent. The bill includes accountability safeguards and per-



*Washington State Supreme Court Justice
Richard P. Guy administered the oath
of office to Rep. Cox this past January.*

2000 Legislative Session Review



formance standards to ensure that benefits and retraining dollars are spent effectively and responsibly. The legislation also controls payments to those who quit work, or refuse to accept suitable employment.

Nobody got everything they wanted in the bill, but the compromise plan balances the interests of business and labor, Democrats and Republicans. It's an example of how much can be accomplished if we tackle these challenges together.

Governor signs Schoesler tax-break bill to reduce ag burning

On March 22, Gov. Locke signed a bill sponsored by Rep. Schoesler that creates tax breaks for wheat growers and grass-seed farmers to encourage reductions in agricultural burning. Although burning is still al-

lowed for cereal grains as a means of getting rid of straw, the Wheat Growers Association signed a memorandum of understanding with the state departments of Ecology and Agriculture to reduce emissions from field burning by 50 percent by 2006. The measure ensures a reduced tax burden to offset the extra costs of compliance with the agreement.

Schoesler's bill (**E2SHB 1987**) provides exemptions from sales and use taxes for the purchase, installation and maintenance of machinery and equipment used to reduce agricultural burning or decrease air emissions resulting from field burning. The sales tax exemption expires Jan. 1, 2006.

Additionally, the measure includes a business and occupation (B&O) tax credit for 50 percent of the costs of buying such equipment, construction of buildings to house the equipment, and structures for storage of processed straw. The B&O tax credit also expires Jan. 1, 2006.

Exemptions and credits would also be available to farmers and others involved in the manufacture or marketing of straw-based products.

House passes resolution honoring WSU's Smith

The state House of Representatives passed a resolution honoring Dr. Samuel H. Smith, who is stepping down this summer as the eighth president of Washington State University. Smith, who will retire in July from the post he has held since 1985, looked on from the House gallery as legislators lauded the popular administrator's accomplishments and leadership.

Reps. Schoesler and Cox sponsored the resolution, which they called a celebration of a solid record of achievement and progress at WSU under Smith's direction.

Schoesler commended Smith for strengthening the university's academic prestige, its preeminence in the field of agriculture education, and its reputation in research and technological innovation. Rep. Cox, who serves as director of the WSU Rural Education Center, praised Smith for his commitment and personal leadership.

"His reputation for hard work and strong, ethical leadership is the hallmark of his exceptional career as an educator and administrator," said Cox.



K-12 Education

In our January newsletter, we said one of our agenda items was to **"Provide quality education by letting children learn, letting teachers teach and letting parents choose."** Even though it was a short session, we worked hard to create education priorities to:

- Allow teachers to remove their children from a failing public school to attend the school of their choice.
- Promote classroom safety by giving teachers and principals more authority to remove disruptive students



- Recruit and retain the best teachers through teacher testing and certification of teaching specialists.

Teacher testing legislation was approved. **House Bill 2760** requires teachers to pass a basic skills exam, plus examinations in specific subjects they plan to teach. We supported and voted for the measure and will continue to work for additional education improvements next session.

The House-approved budget included key K-12 education enhancements including:

- **\$4 million** to offset unforeseen increases in fuel costs for school transportation.
- **Moving \$100 million** from the state's reserves to the school construction account.
- **Dedicating \$58 million** in lottery proceeds to create a Better Schools Fund, which would distribute money to all school districts on a per-student basis for extra learning opportunities.
- **A provision to stabilize funding** for school districts hit by declining enrollments.

In his second year as Republican whip, Rep. Schoesler has a key leadership role in forging the caucus agenda and directing policy strategy. Here, Mark emphasizes a point during debate on the House floor.

Higher Education

We remain committed to making Washington's higher educational system one of the best in the country. This session we took steps to ensure the quality of the teaching and resources available at local community colleges and universities continues into the 21st Century.

Some of the higher education highlights from the House-approved budget include:

- **Protecting the recruitment and retention pool at WSU and EWU.**
- **Adjusting the budget enrollment policy to an overall growth rate of 2 percent, rather than 2.5 percent.**
- **\$100,000 for additional enrollments in the 2000-01 academic year at EWU.**
- **\$2.2 million for Washington Promise Scholarships for high-performing students.**
- **\$450,000 for research activities related to biotechnology and health sciences at both WSU and EWU in conjunction with the Spokane Intercollegiate Research and Technology Institute (SIRTI).**
- **Fixing the funding mechanism for WSU-Tri-Cities.**
- **\$1.2 million to the state's technical and community colleges to expand information technology and computer science programs.**
- **\$3.6 million for a boiler replacement at the WSU-Pullman campus.**

2000 Legislative Session Review



2000 Questionnaire Tally

We want to thank you for taking the time to respond to our 2000 session questionnaire. Your responses give us better insight into the key issues and priorities set by the people of the 9th District. We value your input, as it helps us better represent you in Olympia.

The following data reflect the 1,258 responses we received in response to our January 2000 district survey.

Transportation

■ How should the state prioritize solutions to our transportation problems?

Your responses:

	<u>1st choice</u>	<u>2nd choice</u>	<u>3rd choice</u>
More roads	216	255	167
Reduce traffic	85	194	283
Better maintenance	629	250	136
Remove commercial vehicles delays	15	56	95
Pedestrian & bike paths	34	100	99
Sound barriers	1	9	16
Better alternatives	248	168	143

Initiative 695

■ What do you think is the major reason I-695 passed?

Your responses:

Reduce the motor vehicle excise tax - **543**
Require public vote on tax and fee increases - **143**
Reduce taxes in general - **180**
Reduce government spending and services - **83**
To express dissatisfaction with government - **332**

Firearms

■ Should the state pass legislation requiring personal firearms to be locked in storage when not in use?

Yes - **333** No - **897**

Privacy

■ Would you support legislation to limit the sale of personal information and require disclosure of such practices?

Yes - **1,196** No - **48**

Tobacco Settlement

■ Which one of the following programs should receive the highest priority for tobacco settlement funds?

Your responses:

Tobacco reduction and prevention programs - **256**

K-12 education - **235**

Health care programs for the needy - **267**

Replace funding for criminal justice programs eliminated by I-695 - **97**

Restore funding for transportation construction halted by I-695 - **196**

Further tax reductions - **172**

Regulatory Reform

■ Current law prohibits state government from contracting with the private sector for many services, even if contracting would be less expensive. Would you support a change in the law that would allow the state to contract out services if it meant the same level of service could be provided at a lower cost to the taxpayer?

Yes - **1,106** No - **124**

Legislative Priorities

■ What are the top three issues that are of greatest interest to you?

Your responses:

	<u>1st Choice</u>	<u>2nd Choice</u>	<u>3rd Choice</u>
Reduce crime	141	249	279
Improve education	224	293	236
Control taxes & spending	562	194	131
Improve health care	166	286	219
Fund mass transit	41	64	101
Raise taxes for lost funding	30	32	42
Improve social services	14	32	84

Emergency Fund

■ In light of the passage of I-695, what do you think should be done with the state's budget surplus or emergency reserve fund?

Your responses:

Retain in the state's rainy day fund - **232**

Keep some in rainy day fund and some for other programs - **421**

Replace funding for programs impacted by I-695 - **163**

Keep some in rainy day fund and reduce taxes - **371**

Representative
MARK SCHOESLER

9th District
Legislative Team

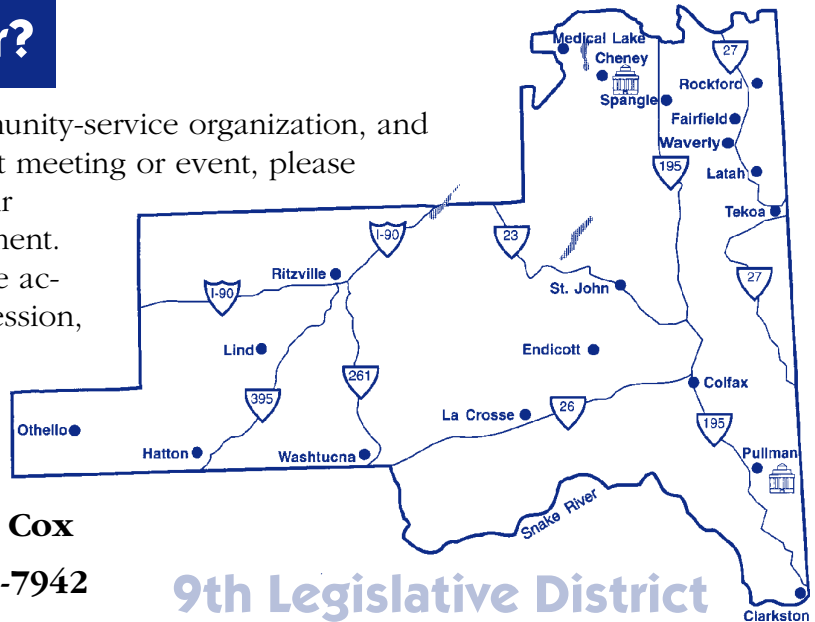
Representative
DON COX

Need a guest speaker?

If you belong to a civic group or community-service organization, and would like a guest speaker at your next meeting or event, please contact Reps. Schoesler and Cox at their Olympia offices to arrange an appointment. Your 9th District team can report on the accomplishments of the just-completed session, or tailor their remarks to address particular areas of interest or concern to your organization.

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9th Legislative District

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State Representatives
MARK SCHOESLER
& DON COX



2000
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